

Within the community all women received about the same service. Though the poor felt the 20 to 30 baht cost⁵ of a midwife was too expensive, and so utilized the free help of a compassionate kinsman (usually the mother) or neighbor, the latter sometimes were as expert manually as a midwife or even on their way to becoming one. The few critical cases, rich or poor, who were taken to the Minburi Health Center managed to pay the 50 to 70 baht fee (120 baht if penicillin were used).

General Attitudes Towards Having Children

In these farm families, children were an asset, for their help, skills, and earnings enriched the family. Boys and girls were equally desired. A girl did household chores and at her marriage brought in the considerable payment of "milk money." A boy could be ordained and so "bring merit" to his parents. Both could farm, and both would provide cherishing care to the parents in their old age, but this was expected particularly of daughters. A child usually arrived within a year or so of marriage, to the rejoicing of everyone. Until the birth of a child, marriage only partially changed the young couple's status, especially if they were still living under the parental roof. With children they became the heads of a family, with authority over, and responsibility for, a younger generation. In the few polygynous households, the position of a younger wife was enhanced when she bore a child. Sometimes on the birth of this or another child, the money paid to the bride's parents at the time of the wedding was turned over to the new mother. Title to some of the familial land, never given until a marriage had proved stable, might be conveyed to one spouse or the other. The arrival of a child was sometimes a signal for preparations for moving out and establishing an independent household, or for establishing a "second kitchen," i.e. two separate families living under a single roof. A study of the birth-rituals (Chap.V) gives evidence that the arrival of a child, especially the first, was of deep psychological and social significance to the parents. The marriage bonds were strengthened if the first-born were male (cf. p. 65). A couple without children was "sad" and "a little less rich." Barrenness was caused by lack of merit.

5. Analysis of Janlekha's figures, borne out in observation, shows that per capita income was low, that there were many poor people, and because of the seasonal nature of income, even the rich were short of cash (1955:135-143). Ninety-two baht were the average "expenses for medicine" including delivery fees (1955:142).

796 relatives, his other kin and friends according to bonds of
574 affection and respect. Certain priests of pleasing person-
alities, wide acquaintance or kinship in the community, or
of valued skills, were invited more often than others, as
were prominent elders and hamlet headmen. An invitation
usually went only to the elder couple in a family. It did
not automatically include the children. If married sons or
daughters were invited, they were asked separately. Poor
individuals were included only in the festivities of their
close kinfolk, their immediate neighbors, maybe their own
hamlet headman, or persons to whom they were obligated. Un-
less they were aged, their presence was validated only by
hard work. Reciprocity was a factor, for one who could not
reciprocate presumably would not be asked, nor would he vol-
unteer. The few who were "anti-social" for whatever personal
reason rarely attended.

262 Most members of the working group and guests left at
574 home their children of such age as to require watching.
796 Nursing babies might be there, hung in a hammock. Though
858 the children who ran excitedly about seemed numerous, most
of them were the children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews
of host, co-sponsors and relatives, so could not be excluded.

To sum up, those who shared least in the diet of the
ceremonial season were the dependent children, i.e. up to
the age of 6 or so, the less gregarious, and the poor who had
no way to reciprocate. Children from 7 to adolescence shared
in a limited way, attending (l)ngaan of their own close kin
or of a geographically close neighbor. Parents sometimes
took snacks from the feast home to the children. On the
other hand, persons of prestige and popularity, especially
if aged, were asked frequently.

262 Doubtless for those who attended many (l)ngaan, the
796 food eaten during the ceremonial season differed consider-
ably from the usual family fare. We have no way of knowing
whether it was better than usual because of a larger intake,
for instance, of pork and meat in general, or whether the
total nutritive value was less satisfactory because of in-
creased consumption of "empty calories" in the form of sugar
and alcohol.

262 During the (l)ngaan season the home meal schedule was
264 frequently disrupted in the families of the participants.
796 The main cook might be absent, too tired, or too full to feel
like cooking a big meal at home. In anticipation of a feast,
preparation of the usual breakfast or dinner or both might be
abandoned, with reliance on a few snacks for the stay-at-
homes to add to their rice. Thus the food intake of family
members who did not attend the ceremonials might be adversely
affected,

000 One other aspect of (l)ngaan which should be mentioned

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relationships: within the family, usually in terms of the relative ages of people; elsewhere, in terms of age, wealth, power, knowledge, religious or governmental role. Secondly, they are based on the assumption that every individual, regardless of his position in the hierarchy, deserves respect. The first is a respect associated with the proper performance of one's role; the second, a recognition of the essential dignity of every human being.

The role of these respect patterns cannot be emphasized enough. Benedict, in her study (1946) of Thai culture at a distance, referred to the learning of the *waj*, or gesture of obeisance, as "the first teaching the child receives." Although the *waj* is perhaps not the very first social act the child learns, I have seen infants no more than two weeks old being guided by the mother in raising the palms of their little hands to the forehead in expression of deference to superiors. The older infant who can do this on his own almost always receives acknowledgments of approval and delight from the adults in attendance. An older sibling really means it when he says of his relationship with his younger brothers, "when I ask them to do some kind of work, they go and do it. They never disobey, and when there is no disobedience, there is no hatred. . . . Formerly, whenever there was entertainment somewhere I took them with me. My younger siblings love me a lot. . . ." His position in the authority structure assumes the respect of those younger than he, and they willingly grant it for, among other things, he plays his role well as the kindly superior who takes them with him whenever there is entertainment. All the polite little linguistic forms (honorifics, expletives suggesting status and, most important, ordinary kinship terminology with its specification of relative age) as well as kinesthetic forms (lowering the body while passing a seated older person, holding the younger between one's legs and with arms around him in a position of protection) also serve to emphasize the respect that people grant one another because of their differential status. Perhaps the most revealing illustration of the strength of these patterns, at least the authority pattern, was provided by a two-year-old toddler who pointed to the stomach of his pregnant mother and said with pride, "My younger sibling is in there. When he is born he will be my responsibility." Little doubt that when the child is born he will give his older brother his due.

With regard to the other respect form, recognizing the dignity of every human being, more than once I have heard parents say that they disliked giving their child a certain medicine "because it offends the baby; he does not like it. It is better not to give it to him than to hurt his feelings." Although I do not doubt that in some instances the parents were annoyed more by the screams of the child than anything else, I am also convinced that for the most part they were respecting his basic individuality and right

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*156 to choose, even if in this case it was seemingly to his own detriment—he
 858 knows what is best for himself. Even the incompetent, helpless infant is an
 independent soul with his own will and right of determination, and his
 dignity must be respected.

858 It must be recognized of course that in the cosmology of Bang Chan the
 828 infant is anything but a conative *tabula rasa*. When he enters the world of
 human beings he brings with him not only a stock of individually ac-
 cumulated merit (*bun*) and demerit (*baap*) from countless previous lives
 which will affect his being in this one, but also a host of other forces which
 predetermine his character: his *khwaan* (soul-stuff), *winjaan* (psycho-
 biological motive power), *caj* (heart), and *nidsaj* or *ʔupanidsaj* (ingrained
 [114] character), among others. (J. R. Hanks 1959 has a brilliant exposition of
 the role of these elements.) In a very real sense the infant enters the world
 of humans as a developed, or partially developed, psychological being.
 Human influences, particularly virtue and "good habits," can be inculcated
 into him, but they are ultimately limited by these pre-natally determined
 861 characteristics. Much of Bang Chan child rearing is actually a series of
 155 perpetual compromises between (a) parents surrendering to what they
 think are the child's predetermined traits (and while this represents an
 extraordinary respect for his infantile individuality, it also leads in a
 developmental sense to much of the solipsism to which we have been
 referring throughout); (b) parents trying to come to terms with, or
 overcome, his preordained characteristics by inculcating good habits
 through example, coaxing, and whipping (the three modes of socialization,
 in order of priority, although villagers are more prone to talk about whip-
 pings than actually give them; most are too tenderhearted, and the rare
 whipping is almost always the result of sudden rage); and (c) leaving the
 child to his own devices. The third differs from the first in that it focuses on
 the parent's concerns rather than the child's and indicates indifference
 rather than respect. Thus, in contrast to the illustration above, one con-
 stantly sees children, generally under eight years of age, "annoying" con-
 versing adults (primarily by making noises, although not necessarily to get
 the latter's attention) to which the parent responds with continuous but
 intermittent "tsk, tsk." The adult never raises the volume of his admoni-
 tion, never gets increasingly disturbed, and eventually gives up while the
 children continue on their merry, noise-making way. The parent's lack of
 genuine concern and compulsion is not lost upon the child. Although
 events of this type are not overly noticeable in Bang Chan—precisely
 because they occur in such an easygoing and unremarkable way—they do
 take place repeatedly, and represent one of the principal interactional
 themes of the parent-child relationship. Children learn quickly that al-
 though parents will go through little ritualistic forms of controlling them,

lying configuration.) However, from the point of view of their etiology in 571
the individual, it is clear that the villagers' tendencies toward loose rela- 156*
tionships are related to early childhood experiences. A second source is
their philosophical notions concerning the nature of the individual. These
notions are largely cultural derivatives of Buddhist doctrine, although at
the behavioral level they function simply as unstated premises which guide
and tacitly define behavior.²²

Reference was made earlier to the basic assumptions governing the 858 •
socialization of the Bang Chan child. When the child enters the world of 828
human beings, he is already a partially formed and psychologically inde- [195]
pendent individual, with his own *ʔupanidsaj* (ingrained character) and
khwaan (soul-stuff), not to mention his stock of accumulated merit and
demerit from countless previous lives which predetermines his character.
The effect of these definitions is not only to award to the child a sense of
psychic individuality that is partially²³ independent of any social environ-
ment to which he is exposed, but to assign to him a fundamental sense of
psychological equality. We are not speaking here of social equality. The

²² From a strict analytic point of view, it would probably be best to consider [77]
Buddhist doctrine as an abstract, codified representation of these premises rather than
consider the premises as explicit, logically coherent deductions from Buddhist doctrine.
To be sure, many Bang Chaners often explain and justify their actions by pointing
directly to Buddhist doctrine, sometimes applying its tenets correctly, and sometimes
not. But for most, Buddhism is a diffuse, ubiquitous *Weltanschauung*, the precise
effects and applications of which the villagers are typically unconscious. It would
probably not be incorrect to think of most religious "traditions," particularly the
"Great" codified ones, as functioning in this way.

²³ The term "partially" is inserted here to indicate that despite these ontological
notions, few villagers, as J. R. Hanks (1959) points out, ever consider "any human
child so marvelously endowed . . . from previous existences that training is unnec-
essary." The child's *ʔupanidsaj*, *khwaan*, merit and demerit, as well as his *winiian*
(psychological motive power), *caj* (heart), and *phroomliʔkhid* ("the lines of his
destiny as established by Brahma") are all crucial determinants of his character.
But few Bang Chaners ever think of a person's character as due solely to the uncon-
trolled emergence of these pre-natal forces. Rather, they represent the basic psychologi-
cal raw material with which parents and other socializing agents must work, and set
the limits of these agents' enculturating efforts. What is important is that the limits—
the "degrees of freedom" permitted the parents—tend to be narrowly defined. Inten-
sive probing of informants indicates that there is no general agreement on whether
these cosmological forces are more or less influential than parental training in shaping
a child, although they tend to be invoked more frequently as explanations of negative
characteristics and of unusual happenings, positive as well as negative, in the lives of
individuals. Also, villagers are inclined to think of them as the reasons behind
particular characteristics and events, assigning to parental training a more diffuse
influence in the development of the child. Thus, when asked why a particular indi-
vidual grew up to be a *nagkleang* (an aggressive, daring, sometimes bullying type of
person) and how one of their fellow Bang Chaners had grown up to become an admiral
in the Thai Navy, informants attributed the character and success of these individuals
respectively to their *ʔupanidsaj* and *kam*. (*Kam*, the Thai derivative of *karma*, is the
proportion of merit to demerit that a person may have at any particular moment in

- 858 child is clearly a social inferior, and is due all the prerogatives of his
828 position: he is to be dealt with gently, kindly, and benevolently, with sympathetic regard for his incompetence; correlatively, he must be taught to express deference and obedience to superiors. Rather, the equality awarded the child results from the recognition that in the workings of the cosmic scale it is impossible to ascertain what the child could once have been or eventually will become, and he, like any soul, is always *potentially* of the same value as any other person. It is precisely for this reason that most Bang Chaners, if they mention it at all, are only mildly pleased rather than particularly proud that one of their own grew up to become an admiral in the Thai Navy. It comes as no great surprise that such a thing can happen. To them, it is no more unusual than that the prime minister himself should be a person who was born and reared in a village. (By the same token, the peasant background of these two individuals creates no special sense of personal identification with them on the part of the villagers. They are perceived simply as two unique *individuals*, their peasant roots being viewed as only one of the literally countless factors that made them what they are today.) "To a large extent, the equality of the child derives from the premise that he is not so much a child as he is a human being who happens to be at a particular stage in his ontological

time). When probed further and asked if their parents' training may have had any influence on these individuals, they replied "yes" and "maybe" in the case of the admiral, but disavowed all parental influence in the case of the *nagkleeng*. A few said that the *nagkleeng* became that way because of bad friends.

- [115] One villager, phrasing his comment as a personal conjecture, volunteered that the notion of parents being the major influence on a child's character is a "modern" idea. Another informant, the wife of a school teacher and well versed in her husband's teaching training manual (prepared in Bangkok by Western-trained educators) argued that a person's character is dependent "mostly on the influence of the home and school." However, since on other occasions she complained to me that one of her sons "does not have an *upanisaj* for studying, and there is nothing a parent can do but let the child have his own way," it would suggest that her commitment to the pronouncements of her husband's mentors was not too well internalized.

To avoid confusion, it might be added that from a historical point of view only one of the above cosmological forces (*kam*) is strictly Buddhist in origin. The others are either Brahmanic (*khwaen* and *phroomli^{ph}khid*) or traditionally Thai (*upanisaj*, *winjaan*, and *caj*). Of all the terms, *kam* and *upanisaj* are the ones most frequently referred to when discussing an individual's character.

- [565] "It is precisely for this reason, as I indicated in an earlier writing on Thai social
[571] structure (see Sharp et al. 1956: 163) that Thai society "cannot be said to have a
[554] class system in the classical European sense of the term." People identify with others as individuals, not as representatives of social classes.

The very fact that individual peasant boys can climb the social ladder to attain some of the highest social positions of the land, without it even being considered particularly noteworthy, attests to the fundamental equalitarian nature of the ideas underlying the Thai social system despite the obvious emphasis given to status and hierarchy in individual face-to-face relationships.

NATURALISTIC OBSERVATION OF THAI PERSONALITY

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career. From an epistemological point of view, there is of course nothing strange about such an approach. What is perhaps somewhat unique, however, is that the villagers actually use it as the point of departure in their treatment of the child. 858
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The practical consequences of these equalitarian notions are manifold. 593
For one thing, with the child defined as a separate and equal soul, the relationship between parent and child takes on a highly instrumental flavor; that is, rather than expressing love toward the child as an end in itself or otherwise treating him in ways that require no further justification (it is assumed that love is characteristically an absolute sentiment, not a means to any other satisfaction) villagers explicitly see the relationship between parent and child in contractual terms. Thus villagers say that they "are going to the trouble" of bringing up their children and "doing good things for them" (just as their own parents "went to the trouble" of bringing them up and "doing good things" for them) so that they will have someone to care for them in their old age and make merit for them when they die. Similarly, they say they love their parents because they are indebted to them for bringing them into the world. The language of the "contract" is poignantly explicit: "When I think of my mother, I think of the debt I owe her for bringing me into the world and feeding me so I would survive"; "Parents who do not teach their children how to *waj* [exhibit respect to the parents] get nothing from them. I did many *bunkhuns* [good things requiring reciprocation] for my daughter, so now she gives me everything"; "When I was three my father gave me to my uncle who fed me and trained me, so I loved my uncle more" (cf. pp. 64-66, L. M. Hanks 1959c, and Phillips 1959 for further documentation of this point).

In and of themselves there is nothing strange about these "contractual" criteria. However, they do reflect a fundamental recognition of the independence of parent and child and of the fact that parent and child have the option of fulfilling each other's needs. More specifically, they are expressions of the assumption that there is nothing intrinsic to the parent-child relationship that requires the two persons to be linked together. The relationship clearly is not fortuitous, but neither is it absolute. It functions primarily for the instrumental and symbiotic satisfactions that its participants can gain from it.²⁸ Lacking the absolute elements of an ultimate

²⁸ In his paper on "Changes in Family-Life" in Bang Chan (1959c) L. M. Hanks notes: "At birth a parent ceremonially formally accepts obligations to an unknown infant soul lightly bound to its body; to this point the new-born one without relation to its parent has been under the protection of a spirit mother. This phrasing contrasts sharply with the Occidental concept of 'flesh and blood.'" In another place in the manuscript, Hanks also comments: "... but every case [every kinship tie] is reducible, if one presses the question, to benefits of an older or richer or stronger for the

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124 each person's own ideas, not those of other family members, it would be best to find somewhere we can be by ourselves.²¹ Every informant in the sample eventually accepted our request for privacy with complete understanding. Also, it was usually easy to find an isolated spot: underneath the house, a buffalo shed, in a grove of trees, or if necessary in the boat. 124 However, because Bang Chan notions of privacy do not apply to children, 858 approximately one-third of the interviews were conducted with children in attendance at one point or another. The first time a child appeared, we made an attempt to shoo him away. This, however, was usually futile: he would leave and then return; only the boredom of our adult conversation would eventually drive him away. In the case of nursing children, we would always wait until the mother was free, although if the child wanted the breast during the interview we would simply continue and "ignore" his presence; his mother seemed to, at least at the conscious level.

124 One of the more important administrative tasks of the pre-test was to try 125 out various instructions that would be given to informants on how to take the SCT. During these trial interviews, we experimented with various versions of the "introductory remarks" and settled on the following as the version to be used with our final 111 informants.

124 After explaining to the informant that we had come to chat, and after 123 having chatted (which varied from ten minutes to two hours, depending upon the subject matter and the mood of the informant) we reminded him that I had been sent to Bang Chan by Cornell University to study the life and thought of the Thai people: "My professor sent me, and when I return to America, he will examine me on the information that I have gathered. So I would like to ask you for your *personal* help. I know that you can help me and can give me a true picture of the life and thought of Thai farmers. And [with a giggle] I think you can help me pass my examination." At this point, during the regular interviews, I would remind the informant that a few weeks earlier the abbot of Monastery Bang Chan had, on a ceremoniously auspicious day, supervised the lottery from which the names of my informants had been selected:²²

Aacaan Phuang supervised the ceremony and your family was one of the families chosen in the lottery to be interviewed by me. Both Aacaan Phuang and I thought that this was the best way to select

* [125] ²¹ Informants were also asked, on the same grounds, not to reveal the items or their responses to other villagers. We are certain that there were several who ignored our request—not out of malice but simply because it was not that important to them. However, since there were so many items on the schedule, covering so many different areas, I doubt whether their reports to other potential informants biased our results in any substantial way.

²² I am indebted to Robert B. Textor for having originally suggested this method of selecting part of my sample.